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THE BAGESU

AND OTHER TRIBES OF THE UGANDA PROTECTORATE

THE THIRD PART OF THE REPORT OF THE MACKIE ETHNOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO CENTRAL AFRICA

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THE BATUSE OR BALYAN-WANDA OF RUANDA

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE TRIBE AND ITS GOVERNMENT

The clans—government—powers of the chiefs—taxation—murder—homicide—death in battle—suicide—the chief priest

115 THOUGH much of the Ruanda country became Belgian after the war, there is still a large part of Kigezi which is British Ruanda. My information with regard to these people was derived from two chiefs who were political prisoners in Mbarara. One of them was a prince of Ruanda who had fought against the British during the war and had been captured, and both were exiles from their own country because their king regarded them as dangerous to him and wished to kill them.

THE CLANS

614 The tribe was divided into clans which were totemic, having both primary and secondary totems. Sub-divisions of several clans were mentioned, but the information given was so imperfect as to be of little value. The names given were the same as some of the main clans and details as to the totems were lacking. The list, however, is given to show the existence of such sub-divisions:

1. Abanyiginya, totem, *mpekhi* or *epu* and *efuti*, a calf born feet foremost?

This was the royal clan and had three sub-divisions with the same totems:

(*a*) Abasindi.
(*b*) Nabaganzo.
(*c*) Abene, which had also a third totem, an unmarried girl with child.

2. Abega, totems, *mpekhi* and *efuti*.

Sub-divisions with the same totems:

(*a*) Abakono.
(*b*) Abaha.

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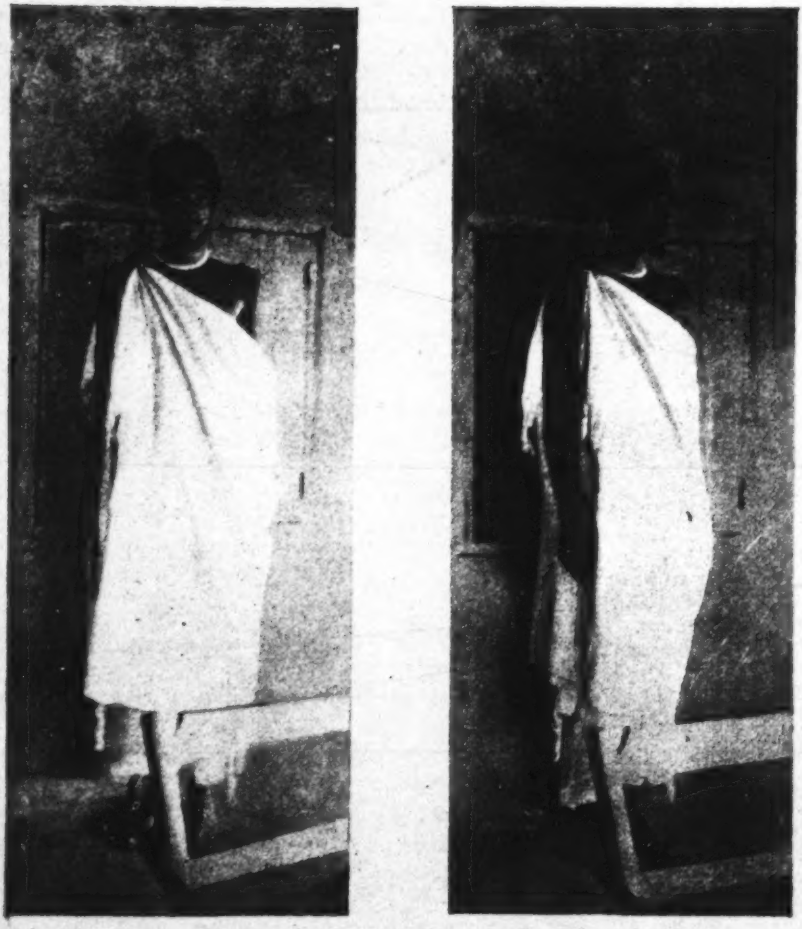

Chief of the Batuse, Ruanda

[facing p. 184]

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614 3. Abakono.
4. Abagisere, totem, *enyamanzi*, wagtail.
Sub-divisions:
(*a*) Abasinga, totems, *enyamanzi*, and *lubombo*, a cow.
(*b*) Abazigaba, ,, ,,
(*c*) Abatyaba, ,, ,,
5. Abazigaba.
6. Abasinga.
7. Abawungara.

[582] The members of this clan intermarry and also marry people from outside tribes and from the clans Abakongole, Abaswere and Abasinga, but not from other clans, for these four clans were despised people and men of other clans would not marry girls from them.

8. Abatyaba, totem, *enyamanzi*. Abanyiginya and Abega clans refuse to marry girls from this clan.
9. Abasindi, totems, *mpekhi* and *efuti*.
10. Abakongole.
11. Abasambo, totems, *epu* and a house burned down and lightning. These came from Ankole.
12. Abaswere.

GOVERNMENT

643 692 The head of the country was the king, whose title was *Omwami* or *Mugabe*, and all important cases had to be brought to his court (*Kambera*) for trial. The king, however, did not 634 appoint the great chiefs or *Abatwala*, for their offices were [428] hereditary and they had been appointed by former kings, who divided the land into some forty districts and put a district chief over each. When, however, a district chief died leaving a son who was too young to manage the estate, the king appointed a guardian, often a brother of the dead chief, who administered the estate until the real chief was old enough. The new chief might then give his guardian a chieftainship under him and retain him as an advisor. If the guardian did not receive or accept such an office, he went to the king, who found him some post.

634 693 Each district chief was the magistrate in his own district; [203] but appeal might be made from his jurisdiction to the court of the king, to which the chiefs were summoned by crier, for

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634 the district chiefs formed the council of the king. The court
[693] was under the direction of a special man, a kind of steward or *inhebe*.

The district chiefs were also responsible for building and other work for the king and the state; they had to find the necessary workmen and appoint overseers to direct them. Another man of the king acted as a kind of household steward to see that the buildings were kept in repair and properly attended to.

Each district chief appointed chiefs of the second rank or *Ibisonga* in his own district, and they in their turn appointed the chiefs of the third grade or *Abafragizu*. Each district chief also appointed a steward or *inhebe* who acted in his place when he had to be absent from his district. This man always possessed land near his chief so that he might be at hand when he was wanted. His special duty was to take charge of any building for the chief.

Taxation

634 Every year a district chief had to bring two or three
651 hundred large pots of honey, each holding some two gallons, and a supply of millet, peas, and beans to the king. This was brought to the district chief by the people on his estate, and he took a portion for himself before passing the required amount on to the king.

[231] Twice in the year each person with cattle gave to the king a cow and a calf to supply him with milk and a fat animal to be killed for his meat. Milk was also sent daily to the court for the use of the king and his household.

Murder

682 It was the duty of the relatives of a murdered man to hunt
628 down and capture the murderer and put him to death; they rarely accepted any other settlement. If a murder was committed before witnesses, they would seize the murderer and hand him over to the relatives of the dead man. If, however, one man abused another before witnesses, the offended man

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might put the other to death without fear of punishment, for the witnesses would state the reason for his action and he would not suffer for it. 682 628

When a murder was committed secretly and the body was found without any trace of the murderer, it caused much difficulty. The relatives had to inform the chief of anything they knew concerning the relations of the dead man with the people of the district. Any person with whom the dead man had had a quarrel or disagreement was captured, and a priest killed a fowl and took an augury in order to find out whether he was guilty or not. Should the augury be in the suspected man's favour he was released, and some other magical means of finding the murderer were tried. [695]

Sometimes a murderer would confess his deed to the king or chiefs and notify his desire to atone. The family of the murdered man were called to a meeting and the murderer had to supply a sheep. The king was present at the meeting and ordered the animal to be killed and cut open, after which the murderer and the head-man of the murdered man's clan placed their hands on the entrails. Portions of every kind of food used by the people were brought and placed in the sheep with purificatory herbs, and again the two men placed their hands in it. The sheep was then called *Maana* or god and was the pledge of peace. Some clans, however, refused to make peace with a murderer and awaited an opportunity of killing either the criminal or some member of his clan.

When a man killed another accidentally and succeeded in proving that there was no malice or intention about the act, he paid fourteen cows to the family of the dead man, with whom he remained on friendly terms. If a man wounded another he paid him eight cows as compensation. [683]

When a warrior killed a man in battle, the king and chiefs honoured him and gave him presents of land and cattle. Sometimes when the king was specially pleased, he would give a warrior a princess to wife. The warrior had to be purified on his return from the battle, but observed no other taboo. 727

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762 When a man committed suicide, he was buried as usual;
766 but a medicine-man was summoned to tell by augury whether
787 the house had to be deserted or was still fit to live in.

RELIGION

773 I received a statement respecting the religion of the Batuse
[115] from Captain Phillips, the District Commissioner. They were,
[776] he said, monotheistic and had a chief priest who was initiated into his office by a journey up a certain mountain where there
[778] was said to be a flock of sheep sacred to the god. This was a
[782] dangerous exploit, but before a man was accepted as priest he had to go there with a sheep, which he offered to the god.

This chief priest kept all the fetishes and carried out all religious observances for the king, who kept neither fetishes nor priests about him. When there was any illness or other trouble, the king sent a bull, a sheep, or a fowl (in the case of
[787] war, a bull, a ram, or a cock) to the priest, and an augury was taken from the flow of blood and from the markings on the lungs and intestines.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE KING

The kings of Ruanda—government and taxation by the king—food of the king—wives of the king—heir to the king—death of the king—mourning—burial—accession—the king's mother and her brother

643 THE list of the kings of Ruanda was given as follows: Kigwa,
173 who came from heaven—his son, Kimanuke, who begat Randa — Merano — Kobo — Gihanga — Kalyaruanda — Ruganza — Kirimu — Kigeri — Mutabazi — Gahima — Ndahiru — Ndole — Muhenzi — Namuhesera — Sekalongoro — Huhi — Kirima — Ndabalasa — Mubamwhe — Gahiridirwa — Lwogera — Lwabugiri — Lutariridwa, who was killed by his brother Musinga, who still reigns.

692 The king's court was the court of appeal for all his subjects
645 and his council was composed of the high chiefs.

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and his council was composed of the high chiefs. He imposed taxation of honey, millet, peas, beans, cattle, and milk, and the chiefs were responsible for any building or other state work he required.

The king's first meal in the morning was of milk, which he took either fresh or clotted as he preferred. At noon he generally drank beer, but he took no other food until evening, when he had meat with peas, beans, or millet porridge, but he might never eat sweet potatoes. After this meal he drank either beer or milk, which shows that the people were abandoning the strict rules of the milk diet which would have forbidden his drinking milk immediately after eating meat and vegetables. During the night he was roused and offered milk to drink. The favourite wife waited upon him and ate with him, and special boy attendants ate any meat that was left over from his meal.

The king married as many wives as he wished, suitable girls being added to his harem as they were found. The favourite of the moment was treated as the chief wife. These women were continually consulting medicine-men and priests, who told them whether they were going to bear children and took auguries to decide who would be the mother of the future king. The king often chose a prince to succeed him, and when he grew up informed him of his future and made him a partner with him on the throne. The other princes were sent to govern different parts of the country as chiefs.

When the king felt that he was seriously ill, he ended his life by taking poison. When he died the news was circulated over the country. There was no rule against naming the king after his death nor against saying that he was dead. The whole tribe shaved their heads and all men kept apart from women during the two months of mourning. The males of cows, goats, and sheep were also separated from their females for this time, and the udders of cows, after milking, were smeared with ashes instead of with white clay as was usual at other times. One cow was killed when the king died.

A certain district was reserved for the burial of the kings,

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643 and each king had a hill kept for his grave alone. On this a
766 large house was built and the grave was dug inside it; servants were selected to look after the tomb, and cows were dedicated to the dead king. The hill was thereafter looked upon as sacred and no king would walk upon the hill where a predecessor lay buried. Though only one cow was killed for
[782] the king at his death, two or three hundred were sacrificed at the end of the mourning.

643 The king usually stated which son was to reign in his stead
721 and if possible his wishes were respected; but if he had made no appointment, the chiefs chose a prince to be their new king. If in this case any brother prince objected, the two princes went to war until one or the other was killed.

644 The king's mother and her brother acted as advisors to the
766 king. A special district about four miles from the tombs of the kings was reserved for the burial place of the kings' mothers.

CHAPTER XXX

LIFE AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE PEOPLE

Food—serving meat—entertainment of visitors—fire—the cattle—care of the cows—value of cows—birth of calves—goats, sheep, and bees—agriculture—growing millet—drums—dances—adoption—slaves and servants

FOOD

262 THE Batuse were not so dependent upon milk as were the
234 cow-people of Ankole, but it formed an important part of their diet. When a man rose in the morning, his wives or
[302] servants brought butter and anointed him, rubbing it well into the skin. They then gave him as much milk as he could drink and he took no solid food till evening. At noon he might drink beer or milk, after which he usually slept for a time. In the evening, however, he had a meal of meat and plantain or millet porridge, and after it he might drink milk again.

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Meat was always cut from the bones before being served, 252
and the bones were given to the servants or to peasants. Men 264
sometimes ate with their families, but almost always they ate
alone and in secret, and even the food that was left over from
their meal might not be seen, for should there chance to be [626]
bones amongst it, the man was laughed at and made fun of
by those who saw it. It was the duty of a man's wife to cut
up the meat and remove all bones. If a friend paid a visit he 574
might partake of a meal only if he was with his host from the
beginning of it; if he arrived during the meal he was not
permitted to approach. The rules of hospitality were very
strict, and even a poor person of the same clan would be [614]
invited to share a man's meal, while the richest member of
one of the despised clans would never be allowed to do so.
Among the better classes the cooks were men, but among [462]
poor people women cooked for their husbands.

There were no special rules about fire; but it was always 372
preferable to obtain it from some other fire, and only if this
was impossible would they use fire-sticks to kindle it.

The Cattle

The people were largely agricultural, but cows were looked 231
upon as their wealth and they kept large herds, some running 556
even into thousands; while a man who was considered only
moderately rich would have four or five hundred.

The people, because of their agricultural pursuits, had fixed 233
dwellings, but the herdsmen wandered about with the cows [361]
for pasture. The cattle were of mixed types, some short-
horned and some long-horned; they were divided into herds
of two to four hundred, each herd being under the care of a
head-man and twelve or more others. They roamed the pasture
lands two or three months at a time without returning home,
sleeping in grass huts hastily erected, while the cattle were left [343]
in the open without fences. The calves were kept in the huts and
their presence prevented the cows from straying, while a watch
was kept to protect them from wild animals. The men stayed
only a few days in each place. The wives of the herdsmen lived

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233 in the villages near their fields; but they had to bring food daily to the place where their husbands were, for even the herdsmen did not live entirely upon milk. Cattle were never kept inside the fences enclosing the dwellings of the king or other owners, but the herdsmen had to bring milk after each milking to the owner of the herd even if the cattle were at some distance.

The men regarded their cows as their own and might sell [422] or exchange them as they thought fit, but the king claimed all the cattle in the country and might take any he wanted from any herd. The value of a cow was twenty goats and of [435] a bull fifteen goats, while a goat was valued at five hoes. A woman who had been captured in war might be restored to [727] her tribe for a payment of three cows for a woman of the better class and six goats for a peasant.

When a cow was thought to be about to calve at an incon- 233 venient time during a journey or while grazing at such a 825 distance that the calf would have to be carried home, the herdsmen tied a little grass round its horns close to the head and this was said to retard the birth. When a cow which had calved did not cast the after-birth, the first milk was placed upon a stool for a time and then poured away. If the cow recovered without parting with the after-birth, the owner might not drink the milk from it but left it to the herdsmen until the cow had another calf and the placenta came away. For fourteen days after a cow calved, the milk was drunk by the herdsmen or by children and not by the owner of the cow. [784] No taboo was attached to the navel cord of calves.

Goats were preferred to sheep, but both were reared in 231 437 large numbers, not so much for meat as in order to exchange them for cows and other necessary articles. Most men also [651] kept bees, for honey was demanded as a tax by the king and [237] was an article of food among all classes. A large pot of honey with the comb was sold for a goat, and a small pot of refined honey for two hoes.

AGRICULTURE

241 Each wife possessed a plot of land on which she raised crops to supply the family with food. Among the better classes the

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wife did not go out to work herself but left it to the servants and slaves. Among the poorer people, however, both husband and wife worked in the field.

They grew millet, both the large kind and the small millet called *bulo*, peas, beans, maize, sweet potatoes and various other roots, and kassava.

For the millet crop the ground was dug over with the common short hoe; and before the seed was sown, a small basket of it was taken to the medicine-man, who gave it his blessing and mixed some medicine with it or placed a fetish in it. Some of this seed was mixed with that which was to be sown, and the basket with the remainder was kept in the field during the sowing and afterwards taken home and kept in a safe place to ensure good crops.

As the grain ripened, guards were placed to scare off birds and wild animals. The firstfruits of the crop had to be eaten by the owner and his wife, and the grain was stored in granaries near the houses. For use the millet was ground and boiled to a stiff porridge which formed the principal food of the people.

Drums and Dances

Drums were in common use in the country and were beaten morning and evening. Drums were beaten before the king's house at the noon hour and all the people clapped their hands. It was thought that if these drums did not sound, disorder would prevail and the people would not know what time of day it was. Even when the king was dead these drums were sounded. Special drums were also beaten at new moon, and were the signal for a fresh relay of monthly workers to take up their posts and relieve those on duty about the king.

The chief drums were *Kalinga*, *Kiragutu*, *Kirimugezi*, and *Basibihugo*. Kalinga was given to the king on his accession by the people and he accepted it by taking the stick, beating the drum, and then clapping his hands. The people were never again permitted to see this drum. When the skin wore out a new skin was put on over the old, and each month a bull was killed and the blood smeared over the drum.

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534 782 634 [301] A chief wore two beads on each side of his head, but he did not possess a drum and only used one when it was necessary to propitiate some ghost which was troubling him. A drum was given to him for this special purpose, and he took it to his kraal, where he beat it for the benefit of the ghost.

[644] When saluting the king, the people knelt and clapped their hands.

534 [535] There was always dancing at new moon, which was accompanied by singing, by the music of the royal band, and by bells. The musical instruments consisted of drums and the horns of animals through which the musicians blew, while some members of the band had bells on their legs which sounded as they stamped to mark the rhythm.

Adoption

597 A man who had no son might adopt the child of some relative without any ceremony, but, as a man might take as many wives as he wished, it was not often that a husband was left without a son. If a boy who had been adopted committed some misdeed for which he was cast off by his new parents, his own parents would not take him back. He had to find means of atoning for his fault and gaining the forgiveness of his adopted parents.

597 614 If a man adopted a boy from a clan other than his own, he took him to the fireplace, dropped some millet into the fire and said, "This is my own son and when I am dead he will attend to my needs." A woman naturally did not welcome [578] an adopted son, for he was a standing rebuke to her.

Slaves

567 There were several classes of slaves:

(1) The conquered aborigines of the land who were really free but were regarded by the upper classes as slaves inasmuch as they did menial work for them.

(2) Household slaves. These were mostly women from among the free people who engaged of their own will in this

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Wife of a Prince of the Batuse of Ruanda

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567 kind of service. They could not be sold and might leave service and marry when they wished.

(3) Slaves who had been purchased or captured during wars or raids. These were also women and were seldom sold; when once a slave entered a family she remained there for life. Such slaves were often taken by their owners to wife, and their sons were regarded as legitimate and might inherit property.

CHAPTER XXXI

MARRIAGE, ILLNESS, AND DEATH

Forbidden relationships—initiation—arranging marriages—marriage ceremonies—taking home a bride—polygamy—entertainment of visitors—treatment of illness—death—burial—mourning—the heir—the widows

582 MARRIAGE between the descendants of a brother and sister was forbidden until they reached the fourth generation, that is, the great-grandchildren of a brother and sister might marry.

[881] There were no initiation ceremonies, but before the sons of princes or chiefs were considered to be of marriageable age, they had to prove that they were capable of settling some quarrel or lawsuit between men. The chief instruction given [869] to a youth was how to manage cattle, but he was also taught to cultivate the land.

584 Infant betrothals were common, and the parents of a boy might agree with those of a baby girl for their children to marry when of a suitable age. The boy's parents gave the others a cow as a pledge of the betrothal, and as long as they kept the cow the engagement was binding. If, however, the parents of the girl discovered any cause for breaking the pledge, they returned the cow with a message that the engagement was at an end. When a boy thus engaged came to a reasonable age, he was told of the arrangement and took presents of beer to his prospective father-in-law. When a boy

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584 grew up without anything being arranged for his marriage, he asked his father's brother to find a wife for him.

585 When the day of the marriage came, the bridegroom took a cow and, accompanied by some friends, went to the kraal of the bride's parents, timing his visit to arrive at sunset when the cattle returned from pasture. The friends and relatives of the bride received the young man outside the kraal and they drank beer together. Then a sister of the bride came, and conducted the young man, leaving his friends outside, to a hut in the kraal where the bride was sitting. The bridegroom carried with him a runner of wild gourd which he twisted into a wreath and put on the bride's head. A pot of milk was given to him and he drank a mouthful which he puffed over the bride. He and the bride then placed their hands on the stones of the fire-place on which the pots stood while cooking; they churned a little butter together; a pot with water was put on the fire and together they sprinkled in flour, stirred it with one stick, and made porridge. Then the bridegroom returned to his friends outside the kraal gate and there they danced and drank beer all night, for none of them might sleep.

In the morning a mat was spread outside the kraal gate and the bride's father and some friends sat on it with the bridegroom. A cow was given to the friends of the bridegroom when they left to go home, and later in the day, after the bride's friends had discussed matters, the bridegroom also went home to prepare things for his bride's arrival.

The party which conducted the bride to her new home included her father, her brother's wife, her sister, and her young brother. The bride was carried in a litter and veiled, and the party arrived at the bridegroom's kraal when the cows were returning from the pasture. The bride was received by women relatives of the bridegroom, who took her into a house which they had prepared for her.

In the evening the bride joined her husband, but her young brother slept between her husband and herself that night and sometimes for two or three nights and the marriage might not

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be consummated until he had gone. The rest of the bride's party left on the second day, after receiving presents.

A son-in-law did not fear his wife's parents, but was regarded and treated by them as a son.

A man might marry as many as five wives, but he brought only one of them to live in his own village; for the others he built houses in their villages and visited them there. If he was wealthy, which was usually the condition of a man who married more than one wife, he gave each of them cows to supply her with milk, a man to herd them, men to dig her field, and also maids to wait upon her and work in her field.

A wife was usually restricted to her husband in sexual intercourse, but when a great friend of the husband paid him a visit he might permit him to live with one of his wives who acted as the visitor's wife for the time. It was, however, more usual for a guest to go to another house with his own wife, or for the host and his wife to sleep on a mat on the floor and leave the bed to the guest and his wife.

Illness and Death

When a man fell ill, his wife informed his relatives and a medicine-man was summoned to discover by augury whether magic was being used or whether the illness was the work of some ghost. If magic was found to be the cause of the illness, the name of the person using it had also to be discovered by augury, and he was accused and brought before the king or some chief to be tried. Invariably a man who had been discovered by augury to be guilty was condemned without question; he might appeal to the poison ordeal, but he had very little chance of escape, and was always put to death. If the augury showed the illness to be due to a ghost, a bull was offered to the ghost and it was begged to stop troubling the man.

Before a man died he generally named his heir, who was usually one of his sons, though not necessarily so and not always the eldest son. If a man died without having named

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428 his heir, the king or his clan appointed someone to inherit his property.

764 When a man died, all ornaments and clothing, with the exception of a loin-cloth, were removed, his legs were bent up into the squatting posture, and his head was shaved. A cow was brought to the bedside, a little hair from it was put in the right hand of the dead man and a little milk milked over it. This hand with the hair in it was then placed under the head.

In the case of an ordinary man, the grave was dug by the relatives or servants in the garden near, or, should he have no land, in some secluded spot, and the body was buried there.

766 Should he, however, be a wealthy man, the grave was dug big enough for a bedstead to be placed in it. This was covered with skins, on which the body, wrapped in mats, was laid and covered with skins of wild animals and cows. A second bedstead was placed on top of the first to keep the earth from the body, and the grave was filled up with earth, which was piled into a mound over it. The weapons of a dead man were put on his grave, and in the case of a woman her flour basket was buried with her.

764 A hut without any doorway was built over the grave and a growing fence planted round it. There was always the fear that someone might disturb the dead by digging up the body for the purpose of working magic, and the heir was therefore responsible for keeping this fence in repair until it had grown big enough to keep off people and cattle, after which no further attention was paid to it. After the burial all the people who took part in it were given hot water to wash their hands before leaving for their own homes.

765 A cow was brought and killed by the grave after the burial and was cooked and eaten by the mourners. The skin was dressed and worn as mourning by the heir, or by some favourite child of the dead man, for two months, during which time he might not come into the presence of the king. The mourners might neither wash nor shave. They lived together in one house, avoided all other people, and had to be strictly chaste lest they should incur the ghost's displeasure.

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After the mourning the heir was purified by an elder of the clan, and he then took the mourning garment and buried it in some secret place. The mourners shaved their heads and hid the hair. A medicine-man decided whether the house of the dead man might still be inhabited or not. If the people were permitted to remain there, they, the place, and the pots had to be purified; but if they had to go they gave the pots and furniture away and left the house to fall down. 765 [783]

The heir was purified again by an elder of the clan and then went to buy a cow, which he took to the king, whom he was not on this occasion allowed to see. The next day he visited the king, taking a present of a young bull, and informed him of the death. This reception constituted his acknowledgment by the king as the dead man's heir, but if he proved unsatisfactory he might later be dismissed from the chieftainship. 768 [643] [431] [428]

The heir took all his father's widows except old women and his own mother. He even took widows with children, and the children regarded him as their father. [587]

When a married man lost his father he lived apart from his wife for two months, and on the death of his mother he avoided his wife for one month.

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The red line indicates the route taken by the expedition—The places visited l
people Bakyiga—Bakunta on shore of L. Edward—Katwe and Fort Portal people
and L. Salisbury people Batoso—Mt Elgon people Bagesu and Bazabei—Busoga

End plate - Section A

7: Roscoe M-5 (1919-1920) 1924
FO42 Rundi FO42

191
103
487
133

The places visited for investigation were: Ankole people Banyankole—Kigezi and Fort Portal people Bambwa and Bakonjo—Bunyoro people Banyoro—Soroti and Bazabei—Busoga people Basoga.

[End plate - Section B]